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STATE OF THE COUNTRY

IN THE

AUTUMN OF 1798.

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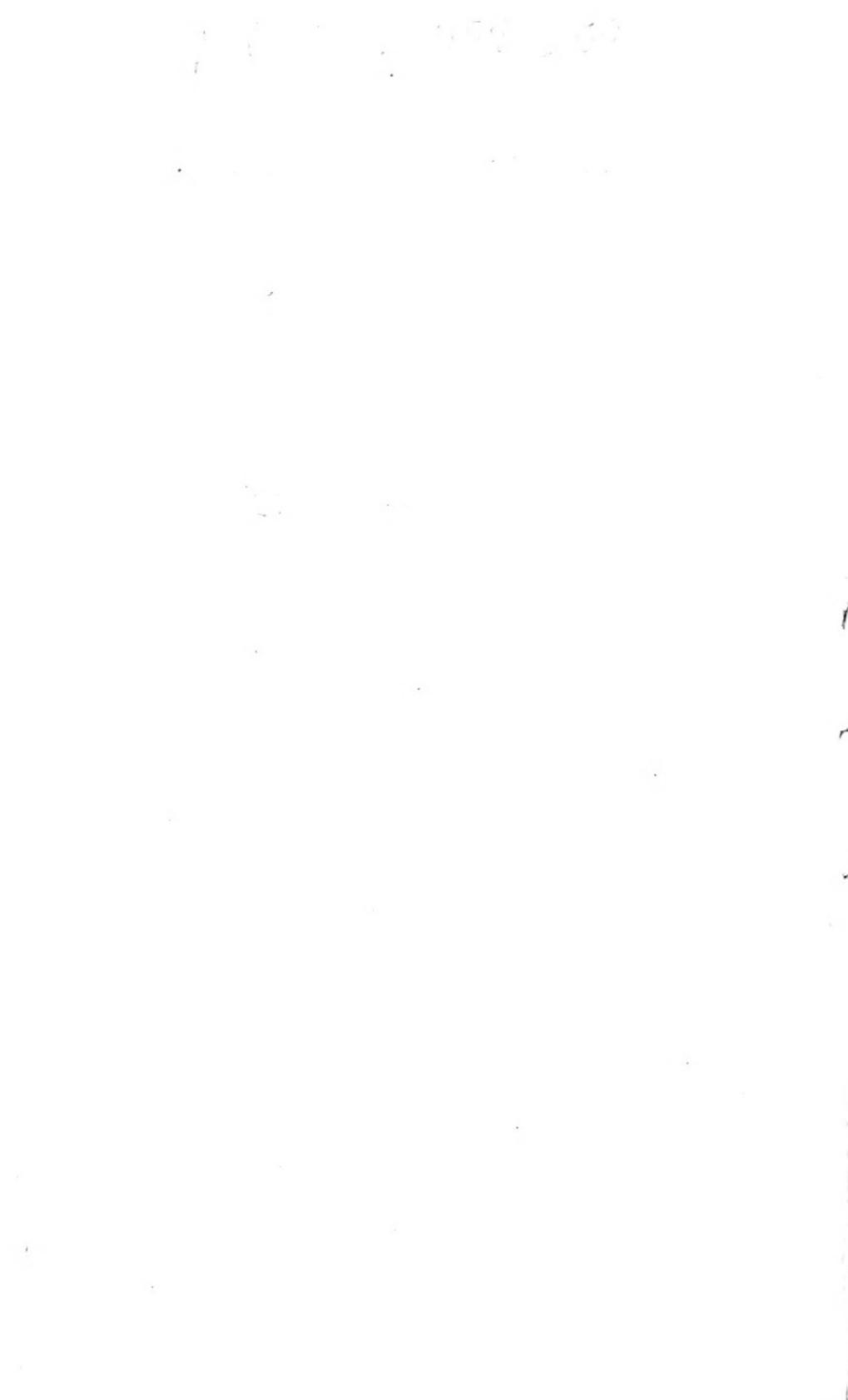
THIS FORTRESS BUILT BY NATURE FOR HERSELF
AGAINST INFECTION AND THE HAND OF WAR.

SHAKSPEARE.

LONDON:

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1798.



STATE OF THE COUNTRY, &c.

IT is now nearly six years since we have been engaged in a contest, the most eventful and sanguinary of any which are recorded in history. The long-established system of Europe has been shaken to its very foundation. The Austrian Netherlands have become an integral part of France : and she has extended her limits to the Alps and to the Rhine. She has subjugated the Republicks of Holland and Switzerland, &c long objects of interest and attention to every country of Europe. She has changed the whole face of Italy ; annihilated Venice ; revolutionized Genoa ; and established Republicks, after her

own model, in Lombardy, and at Rome. She has reduced the Pope to become a wanderer in foreign countries. She has corrupted Prussia; intimidated Vienna; and compelled Spain, first to conclude a peace, and then an offensive alliance with her. But her views have been by no means confined to one quarter of the globe. She has defrauded and insulted America; and has planted the tri-coloured flag on the castle of Grand Cairo, as a previous step to the invasion and overthrow of every empire of the East.

Amidst these scenes of ruin and devastation, the island of Great Britain alone has successfully resisted her power. The British empire has not only been preserved entire, but our Foreign dominion has been extended.

By

By the capture of Martinico, St. Lucia, and Tobago, we have secured our West India commerce, and prevented the contagion of Jacobinism from spreading to our own colonies.

By the conquest of the Cape of Good Hope, and Ceylon, we have secured, and even strengthened our Indian empire.

We have gained over France, and her dependants, four of the most brilliant naval victories, of which there is any example, in the history of the world.

We have taken, burnt, and destroyed, more than sixty ships of the line, and more than a hundred frigates.

We are in possession, at the present moment, of the undisputed command of the ocean in every quarter of the world. We are in the act of blocking up the Dutch fleet in the Texel, the French fleet in Brest, and the Spanish fleet in Cadiz; and the last of our series of Victories, the glorious battle of the Nile, has given a death blow to the naval power of France, in the Mediterranean.

We have annihilated the commerce of our enemies, and added immensely to our own.

Whilst persecution and bloodshed have marked the progress of French arms and French power; We have afforded an asylum to the distressed and afflicted of all countries. The persecuted Priest, the banished Magistrate, the Royalist Officer, grown old in service, have all here found shelter and support.

Their wants have been relieved, their sufferings have been pitied, and their merits have been respected.

In this state of things we ought to offer up our prayers of thanksgiving to Almighty God, by whose aid alone we have been enabled to oppose successfully the designs of our enemies. And we ought to feel respect and attachment to that Government, which has been the instrument, in the hands of Heaven, to effect our deliverance, and to conduct us to safety and to glory. What must be the tree, which has produced such fruit? What must be the nature of those institutions, which have shewn themselves *strong*, whilst every thing around them has proved *weak*?

To enable us, however, to form a just estimate of the conduct of Government, let us take a review of the principles which, from the commencement of this contest, appear to have actuated them.

It is well known, that at the period alluded to, the country was divided (as it still is) into two political parties, who entertained very different sentiments, respecting the French revolution, and the origin of the war. The Party who opposed the measures of Government, continually maintained “ *that France never wished for war; that she had been unjustly forced into it; that she acted on principles purely defensive; that every power might make peace with her, who pleased; that there was as much security in peace, with her, as with many of the ancient governments of Europe; that all those countries, who had been desirous of remaining in a state of neutrality, had found no difficulty in preserving the accustomed relations of peace and amity with her; that she was injured, rather than injuring; and that it was unjust in the greatest degree, to impute to the Government of France, sentiments which were contained in the speeches of a few*

a few extravagant individuals. The party, who defended the war, and the measures of Government, connected with it, contended, *That the war was occasioned by the unwarranted aggression of France; that in defiance of the most solemn engagements, into which she had entered not many months before, she had seized upon the Austrian Netherlands and Savoy as conquered countries, and annexed them to her own dominions; that she had violated the neutrality of Holland, whom she knew we were bound by treaty to defend; that she had proclaimed her intention of supporting the disaffected in all countries against their respective governments; that she had received and encouraged addresses from seditious societies in Great Britain; that whilst these different subjects of complaint were under discussion, she had actually declared war against us; that the war, in fact, grew out of the revolution; that the object of France was to extend her power, and her principles;*

ciples, over the whole world; that if any of the powers of Europe had been able to remain in a state of neutrality, with her, it was, because it could not be the interest of France, to engage herself in hostilities with all the world at once; but that if she succeeded in crushing those powers, with whom she was actually at war, she would then turn her arms against such as had remained in peace.

We have now the conduct of France for a course of six years before our eyes. Which of these opinions does a fair review of it go to confirm? Is it in the treatment of conquered countries, that her MODERATION is to be found? appeal only to the wretched inhabitants of the provinces she has subdued. Is it in her negotiations? look to the conferences at Lille, and the correspondence at Rastadt. Is it in her deportment towards Neutral Powers? inquire of Genoa, of Venice, of Switzerland,

land, of America, and of Turkey. Every one of these Powers had either preserved the strictest neutrality from the beginning of the War, or had even shewn a decided partiality, in some instances a degrading submission, to France. By them, therefore, the Opposition must admit that the character of the French Government has been tried, and let them decide the question.

It would be difficult, at first view, to conceive what could be the object of France, in her conduct towards some of those powers. Switzerland appeared to have nothing in her which could give France any alarm. She had conducted herself towards France, throughout, with the most humble, not to say abject deference and devotion. To revolutionize a country so circumstanced, seemed to promise no adequate advantage; and to oppres the peaceable

able and happy inhabitants might have the effect of exciting a sentiment of indignation throughout Europe ; but the *Great Nation* had decreed it, and no submission, no remonstrance, no concession, could avail. She marches an army into the heart of their territory, and after a short, but severe conflict, subverts the government, and devotes the country to pillage, devastation, and ruin.

America will afford an instance, equally strong, with Switzerland, of the principles which govern the Directory. The distance of America from France, seemed to preclude the possibility of a difference between them on many points, which might occur between nations that were more contiguous ; it was clearly the *interest* of France, to avoid such a line of policy as might induce America, for her

her own security, to connect herself with Great Britain. The obligations which the French Rulers have never ceased to profess they owe America for the elements of their Revolution might incline them, it was supposed, to adopt a conciliatory policy towards this one Power: and certainly no Government could shew greater unwillingness to engage in hostilities, than that of the United States. Yet even America is pillaged, insulted, and compelled to take up arms in her own defence.

The conduct of France indeed, has even gone beyond the apprehension of those who were most awake, from the beginning, to the danger of her principles and extent of her designs; and who saw in War the only means of resisting them: and now at least it must be admitted, by every person not absolutely deaf to the lessons of experience, that the

principle on which the War was originally defended, has been completely verified; that the views of France *were* of the nature they were then maintained to be; and that it would have been fatal to the happiness, and perhaps to the existence of Great Britain, if the line of conduct then recommended by **OPPOSITION** had been adopted. Must not that minister have been insane, who would have advised us to sit by, patient spectators of the aggression of France on all other Powers, until the time should come, when she should be pleased to inform us, that it was our turn to be devoured?

If we have reason to approve of our Foreign policy, we shall find, upon examination, that we have not less reason to be satisfied with our internal system. The apprehension which for several years has prevailed throughout the country,

try, that we were in considerable danger, from the progress of Jacobin Principles, appeared to a great majority both in and out of Parliament to be grounded upon evidence sufficient to justify measures of precaution; but it was uniformly treated by OPPOSITION as unfounded. THEY have continually maintained, *That the Corresponding, and other Societies of the same description, in England, were desirous only of Parliamentary Reform; that the United Irishmen limited their views to Catholick Emancipation, as it is called, and Parliamentary Reform; that the Chiefs of the latter were most virtuous Patriots, and as averse from all idea of pure Democracy, or from any desire to countenance foreign invasion, as the Members of the English OPPOSITION.*—Let us now see how the fact stands.—The PLOT is at last completely unravelled: and we have the distinct admission of the Chiefs of the Irish Union, that their object was *pure Democracy*;

cracy; that, for the purpose of obtaining it, they had connected themselves with France, and had solicited the *afflance of a French Army*, and that, in their opinion, the people of Ireland *cared not a jot for either Catholic Emancipation or Parliamentary Reform.*

We have sufficient proof from the same source*, that there is A PARTY in Great Britain, acting

* It appears by the Appendix to the Report of the Committee of the House of Commons of Ireland, that Binns, a very active member of the Corresponding Society of London, was sent to Dublin in the course of last winter, with an Address from the United Britons to the United Irishmen; that he was introduced to a society of United Irishmen by a person named Quigley. The Brother of this Binns, a member likewise of the Corresponding Society, was afterwards detected in endeavouring to escape from Great Britain to France, in company with O'Conner and the same Quigley, at the very time that there was found in the pocket of the latter, an Address to the French Directory.

acting upon similar principles. But such proof was indeed unnecessary: for who can recollect the dreadful mutiny in the fleet and the confessions that were on that occasion made, by some of the unfortunate sufferers; who can recollect the regular plan that was laid at the same time, for creating a similar mutiny in the army by circulating reports on the same day, in places the most remote, that a general rising of the army had actually taken place; and still persist to doubt that there existed a Jacobinical Conspiracy in this country to subvert the Government? or that the measures

Directory, urging them to invade this country; and it appears by the Report likewise, that Lord Edward Fitzgerald, about the same time, confessed to a friend, who was an United Irishman, that he had received letters from London, which informed him that the disaffected who would rise there on a common emergency amounted to seventeen thousand, but that many more would come forward in case of actual invasion.

of security which Parliament adopted to frustrate its designs, were loudly called for, by the atrocious and desperate attempts of the most daring and flagitious traitors.

In Ireland, measures of precaution unfortunately proved insufficient. The Conspiracy, favoured by many circumstances on which it is not necessary now to dwell, broke out there into acts of open rebellion : but the measures adopted by government for the purpose of suppressing it, appear to have been founded in the soundest wisdom. The conspiracy began in the North, and gradually extended itself Southwards. The policy of the Irish government, was to compel the conspirators to declare themselves in a particular province, before their schemes were ripe for execution, and before they had been able to make any considerable progress in corrupting the adjoining

ing provinces. In the autumn of 1796, and spring of 1797, the province of Ulster was completely organized ; but the conspiracy had made little way, at that time, in any of the other provinces. In consequence of the vigorous and salutary measures adopted by government, the United Irishmen of Ulster were under the necessity of either renouncing their designs, or of rising prematurely : they chose the latter, and by the exertions which government were at that time enabled to make, the rebellion in Ulster was so completely suppressed, that when in the present year, the insurrection broke out in Leinster, the province of Ulster, with the exception of a very few places, remained in a state of tranquility. The same policy has been adopted with equal success in Leinster. The conspiracy had made astonishing progress throughout that province the beginning of this year : but the Irish Cabinet,

in consequence of a thorough acquaintance with the plans of the rebels, had the prudence to adopt such measures of prevention as rendered them desperate. The crisis accordingly came on, and the whole strength of Government was employed in crushing the rebellion in Leinster, before the Chiefs of the Union were ready for action, and before they had been able to extend their designs to Connaught, or even in any very great extent, to Munster.

Thus has Great Britain, surrounded by enemies of every description, been hitherto so fortunate as to baffle all their attempts. We have resisted the power of France abroad; We have preserved peace and tranquility at home, notwithstanding every attempt to disturb it; and We have been successful in suppressing a most daring and bloody Rebellion in our

Sister

Sister Kingdom.—But there are some who will say, that our great object was to destroy Jacobinism in France, and that in that object we have completely failed. My answer is, We have destroyed ONE ARM of Jacobinism, THE ARM by which she was most capable of injuring us,—by the annihilation of her naval power.

It never was, nor ever could be pretended, by any one, that it was possible for Great Britain to succeed against France on the Continent, unless the Powers of the Continent were disposed to perform their duty. No efforts have been wanting, on our part, to stimulate them to exertion. We have confederated them; we have subsidized them; we have entered into the most solemn treaties with them, to every article of which we have remained faithful: but the treachery of some, the weakness of

others, the little jealousies of all, have led them to sacrifice their own honour, and their own security, to the most contemptible considerations. *WE have done our part, and shall, I trust, continue to do it—let THEM, even now, do theirs, and THE WORLD IS SAVED.*

The enemies of the British Government, driven from every other post, endeavour to excite a clamour on account of the expences of the war. That all wars are expensive, that this war has been greatly expensive, cannot be denied : we shall find, however, a remarkable difference between the expences of the present and of any war that has preceded it. In former wars the expences of Government have been annually encreased ; in this war they have lately undergone considerable diminution. But whatever at any period they may have been, could any part of them have been avoid-

ed, consistently with the public safety? Look at the gigantic exertions of France, compare her efforts, in the present, with those she has made in any former war. Look at the expences which she has incurred, for the purpose of destroying us, and then let us ask ourselves, —whether, upon the first view of the subject, we appear to have paid more than might be supposed requisite for our preservation.

It is certainly true, that every war appears to have been more expensive than the preceding; and for very obvious reasons. In proportion as a country increases in population, commerce, and every species of wealth, the prices of the different articles and commodities of life will be raised. The expences of individuals will accordingly be increased, and the expences of Government must always preserve a proportion to the expences of individuals; the

the accumulation of our debt and increase of taxes which has been the consequence of it, must undoubtedly have produced an important effect on all expences private and public : and as it has been our misfortune hitherto that our Debt, greatly increased as it has been during every war, has undergone very little diminution in each succeeding peace, the consequence has been, that we have commenced a new war, with nearly the same burdens with which we concluded the former In this state of things, supposing two wars, in which the exertions were exactly the same, the last will be found of course considerably more expensive than that which preceded it.

The present Administration have, however, effectually guarded against the continuance of this evil recurring in future, if we should be successful in overcoming our present difficulties.

ties. They have been the first ministers who, during a long and arduous war, have preserved inviolate the SINKING FUND established during the peace. But they have done more: in proportion as our debt has been increased, a SINKING FUND has been established for the liquidation of it in a limited time. The whole SINKING FUND amounts at this time to nearly FOUR MILLIONS STERLING A-YEAR; a sum so great, as would promise, in case of the restoration and continuance of peace, to relieve us from all our difficulties in no very long space of time; and in the event of the continuance or renewal of war, it will accumulate in a very few years to such an extent as would be sufficient to enable us, with the aid of a WAR-TAX, to carry on any contest in which we may be engaged, without the necessity of any further increase of permanent debt.

We see, from what has been stated, that our present difficulties were inevitable; but if the country is true to itself, the perseverance of the Minister will accomplish the greatest *desideratum* in British policy. Our finances have always been considered as our vulnerable part: the errors which have made them so have at last been discovered; and we may be successful, if we exert ourselves at the present moment, in placing them upon such a footing as may enable us to bid defiance, upon that score, to all the designs of our enemies. The rise of the publick funds, at a moment like the present, proves the confidence of men of property in the resources of the country; and the benefits that may be expected to accrue from the annihilation of so large a portion of our debt by the redemption of the land tax, will have the effect of facilitating THE GREAT OBJECT of
the

the Minister, and of enabling him to place the finances of Great Britain in a state of security, hitherto unknown to the government of any country upon the face of the earth.

Unanswerable as the question must be, there are some who will not fail to ask us again and again, When shall we have peace?—Let these persons ask themselves seriously, Whether they believe we have any choice? and, even if we had, let them look at such of the neighbours of France, as are actually at peace with her, and ask themselves, Whether they think their situation is much to be envied?—That our CAUSE will finally triumph; that Religion will subdue Atheism; Virtue, Vice; and Order, Anarchy; we may consider as certain: but how long the conflict may last, it is not in the power of MAN to determine.

We should consider how great are the means which Providence has placed in our hands:— We have a powerful and triumphant Navy, a gallant and spirited Army, an unparalleled Commerce, and a flourishing Revenue. It is our duty to use these advantages with wisdom and firmness, and to support any difficulties which may arise in the contest, with constancy and patience.

As often as France has shown the least disposition to return to A SYSTEM OF MODERATION, the Government of this country have endeavoured to avail themselves of it, and to lay a foundation for peace. Hitherto their efforts have proved ineffectual; but the same policy will be adopted whenever THE DISPOSITION AND CONDUCT OF THE ENEMY will admit of it.

As

As long, however, as it shall appear to be the system of France *to spread destruction over every part of the civilized world, to crush every government that disputes her will, and to measure her rights only by her power,* it is a duty we owe to God, to ourselves, and to the world at large, to employ our whole strength in opposing her designs, and to assist and support every state which is desirous, however late, of taking up arms in the common defence. We hope it will not be our fate to contend alone; but whatever be the conduct of other countries, our determination is taken. *They may crouch.—They may temporize.—They may submit.—We know our duty.*—We feel as Christians and as Men. In the issue of the present contest, the existence of all Religion and all Government, and the Rights of Human

Nature, are involved. We trust We have the
the spirit, We know We have the power, to
defend them.

FINIS.

November 20th, 1798.

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